

LAKEWOOD-Supporting efforts to improve Southern California's air quality, Congresswoman Linda T. Sánchez participated in the South Coast Air Quality Management District's (AQMD) "Ride n' Drive" event today to promote everyday usage of alternative fuel technologies. Through this program, the AQMD is promoting the use of low and zero emission vehicles. Congresswoman Sánchez test drove the Mercedes Benz Hydrogen, the Toyota Prius Hybrid, and the Honda Hydrogen Fuel Cell cars.

"The Los Angeles area is the second most populated urban area in the United States and one of the smoggiest," said Congresswoman Linda Sánchez. "Our vehicles produce almost half of the ozone forming pollution and we always need to find new ways to do our part to keep our air clean. New clean air technologies, such as low and zero emission vehicles are simple and efficient ways that we can play a part in protecting our environment," added Congresswoman Sánchez.

Sánchez has taken several actions in Congress to improve southland air quality including co-sponsoring the Gas Price Spike Act (H.R. 2070) which gives a \$3,000-\$6,000 income tax credit to those who purchase fuel efficient, American made passenger vehicles. Additionally, she secured \$2.4 million for the Diesel Emission Reduction Program that pays part of the cost to help low-income independent truckers retire their older, heavily-polluting diesel trucks for newer, safer and much cleaner trucks. The funds secured by Sánchez--the largest federal infusion for the program to date--were part of the federal transportation bill signed into law this past August.

"It is important that we reward consumers who make purchases that will have a positive effect on our environment," added Sánchez.

Air quality in the Los Angeles area has continually improved despite an enormous increase in population and cars. Even though recent years have been the cleanest on record, our air still exceeded the federal health standard for ozone on 28 days in 2004. Maximum levels are almost twice as high as the federal standard for clean air and the clean air effort still has a long way to go. State and federal law requires this area to meet existing clean air standards by the year 2010. However, new, tougher federal air quality standards for ozone and particulates issued in 1997 will require reductions above and beyond those already planned. AQMD estimates it will take until at least 2014 to meet all the new standards.

"In today's world of high gas prices, vehicles that use alternative fuel technologies are not only environmentally friendly; they are great for the pocket book. After today's test drive, I am thinking about getting a low emission vehicle myself!" concluded Sánchez.

The AQMD is the air pollution control agency for all of Orange County and the urban portions of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. AQMD is responsible for controlling emissions primarily from stationary sources of air pollution.